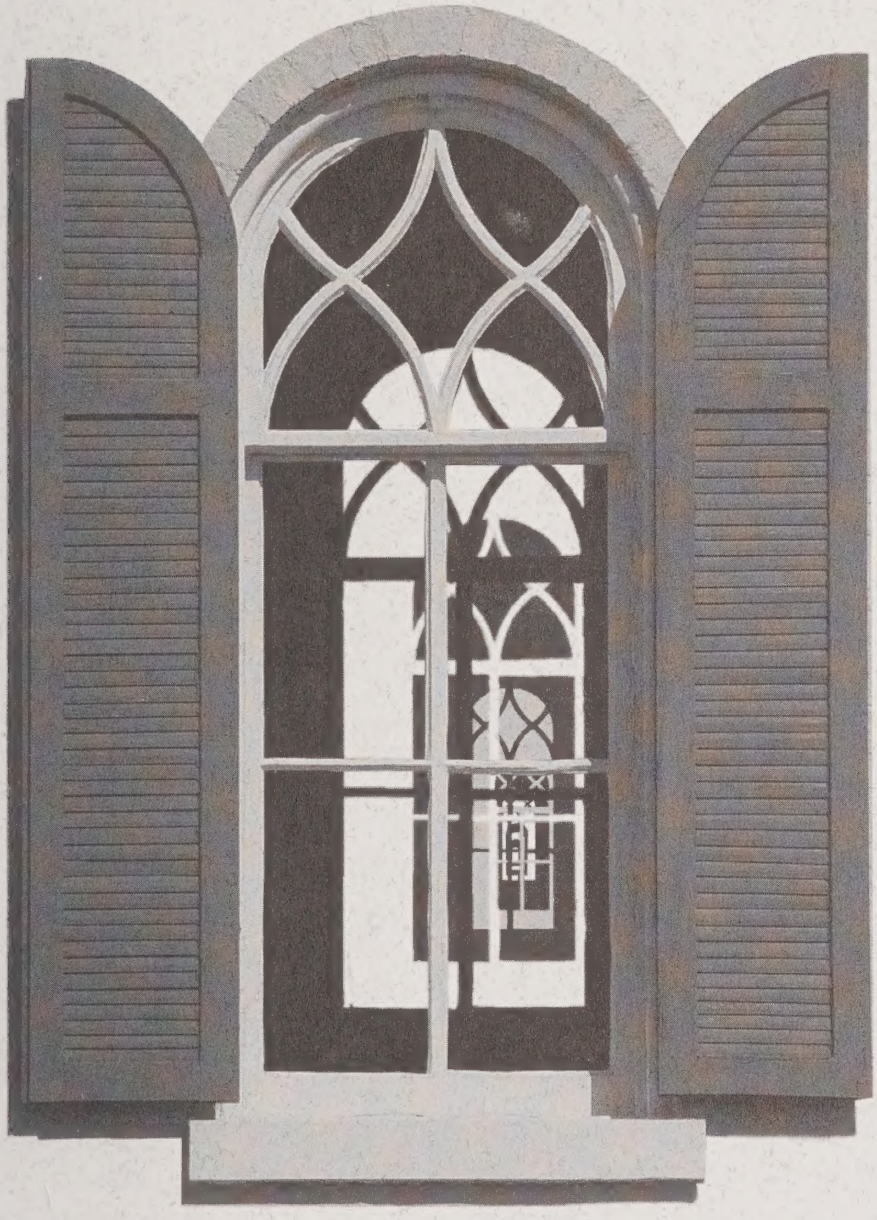
Victoria Press

A-B Tech Community College



10 Year Anniversary

2005

Cover Design by Kenn Kotara
Special thanks to Kenn Kotara and Eddie Gumm
for design and technical assistance in preparing this issue.

Victoria Press

Eleventh Issue

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
Asheville, North Carolina

2005

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This issue of *Victoria Press* is made possible through the support of K. Ray Bailey, President, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College.
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VP 10

"We seek the great forgotten language,
The lost lane-end into heaven,
A stone, a leaf, an unfound door."
Thomas Wolfe

With this issue, we celebrate the tenth anniversary of *Victoria Press.*

The magazine was conceived over lunch one day by Celia Miles and Tom Rash. President Bailey enthusiastically supported the idea of a literary magazine for A-B Tech.

During these years, we have been honored to share with our readers the work of our faculty and staff as well as that of members of neighboring community colleges.

The works of noted writers from this region such as Robert Morgan, Fred Chappell, Wilma Dykeman, Chris Cox, Tommy Hays, Michael McFee, Kathryn Stripling Byer, Keith Flynn, and Ron Rash have also graced our pages.

Two of those writers, Fred Chappell and Robert Morgan, came to our campus for meetings with students and public readings. We especially express our gratitude to Fred for his encouragement and his thoughtful comments on our issues over the years.

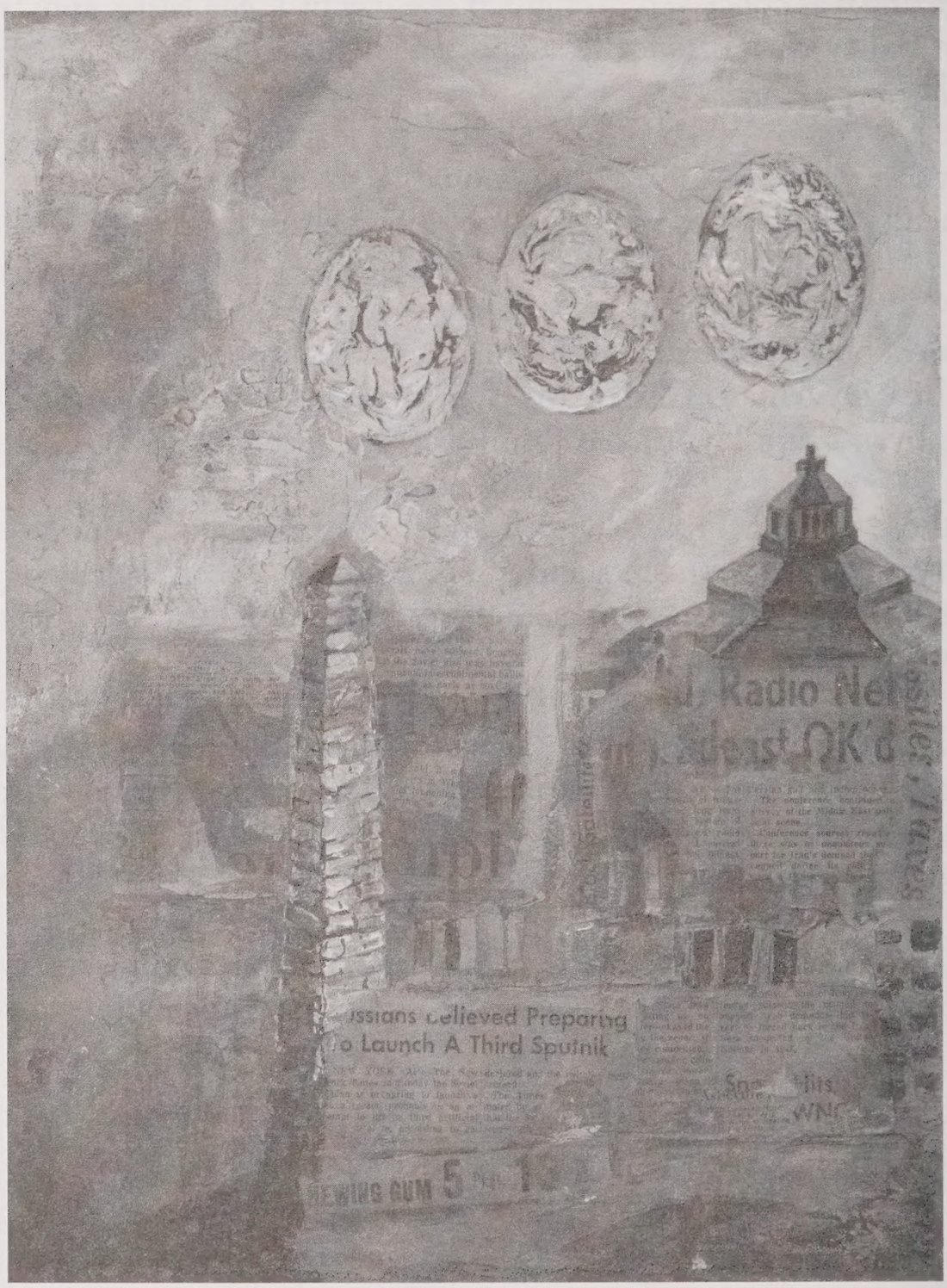
We thank all the past members of the editorial board, President Bailey, and all of you, our readers and contributors, for your patronage. Thanks also to Bob Williams and his staff at Biltmore Press who have worked to produce a first-class magazine for us.

These past ten years have been a terrific time of growth and creativity for A-B Tech. We look forward with much excitement and anticipation to ten more years.

Nancy Dillingham, Editor
For the Editorial Board

"Congratulations to *Victoria Press* upon its tenth anniversary. *VP* is an invaluable publication, in my eyes, because it gives place to voices we might not otherwise get to hear, gives opportunity to young and less familiar writers and artists, and makes a large difference in the atmosphere and tenor of the setting where it thrives. It is one of those welcome enterprises that probably attract less attention than they deserve while active but are sorely wept when missing. May it never join the ranks of the absent! It has earned the right to gain one hundred adventurous years."

Fred Chappell



"Time Line"
Mixed media by Fleta Monaghan

Look Alive!

Fred Chappell

they yelled at Phil
when the grounders evaded his lazy glove
when he backed the family Chevy into the garage door
when he dropped Tuesday a plate
Wednesday a cup Friday a hatchet
that almost severed his left big toe

Look alive!
Phil was alive all right
but only in his head where invisible
ladders sought to lean against the moon

these days infrequently he stops in
on his way from the London cryogenics conference
to performances of his off-Broadway smash
at the good ole Pootertown Tavern
to greet the good ole gang and raise a glass
with Mel Al Pearl Dell Jill & Tull
saying Hi and thinking *For Chrissakes*
can't you guys try at least to
look alive?

While Mel Jill Will & Co. are thinking
Here's ole Phil again
every time he's here we see him
hanging out at the good ole Poot
turned out just like we thought he would
guys like him you can always tell
Hey Phil look alive!
see it just don't register

Collectors

Fred Chappell

it may be supposed that collectors
divulge their innermost beings
by the thing they accumulate

look now upon yon fellow huge and rugged
who locks eggshell china demitasses
in antique glass-front cupboards:
Is it prudent to surmise he wishes
to be a little girl playing Tea Party?
I would not rely upon this conjecture
In a bar fight with "Red Hawg" MacGruder

Mrs. Olivia Hanska possesses
some fifteen dozen enamel snuffboxes
and is allergic to tobacco
What pray tell is her dark secret?

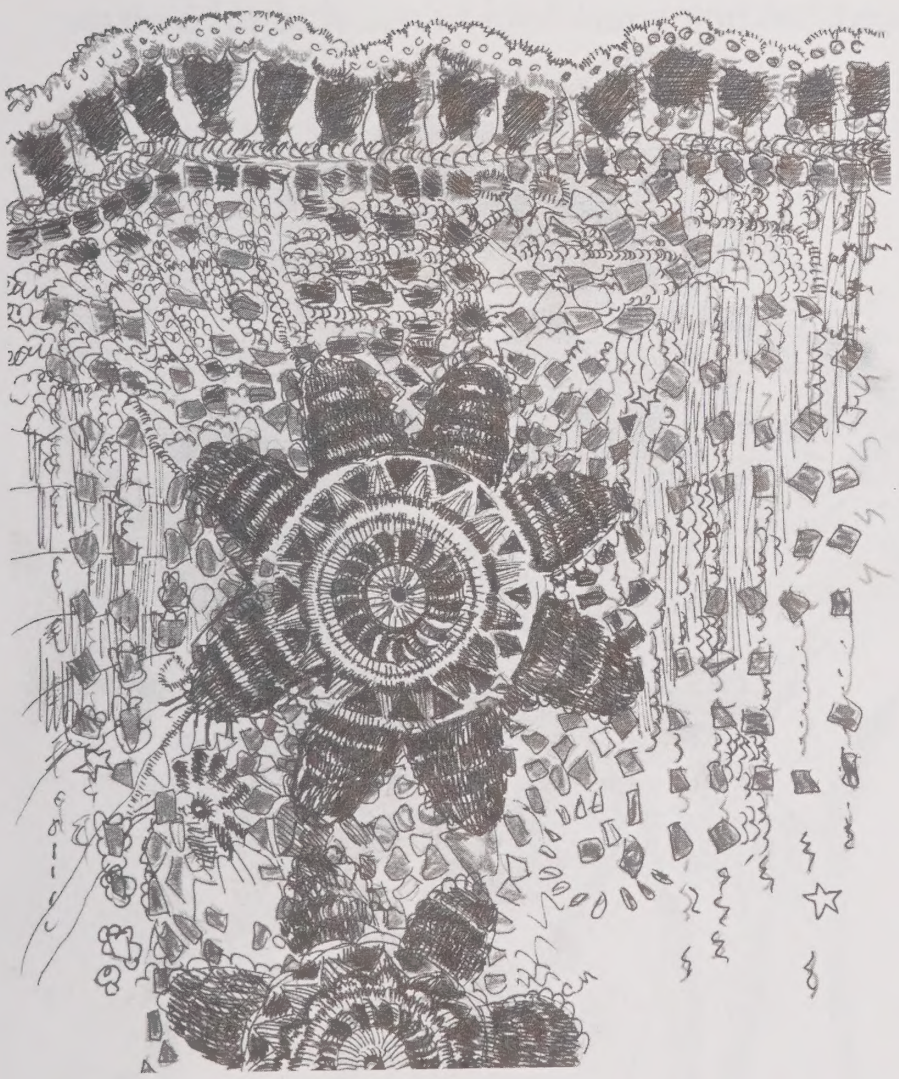
and Ricardo Montaquilo counts
seven ex-wives that we know about:
Because he is fond of women, right?
Seven exes and seven others dispute the notion
Bitterly

the inexpressibly rich Mme von Loringhoven
has collected twenty Catskills dwellings
townhouses cottages mansions lodges
like beggar's lice where she brushed through
the meadow in a long tweed skirt:
Why must she live in Switerzerland?

and Jake "Two Deuce" Wetzler gathers
porcelain thimbles 1500 at last count
maybe it makes some sort of sense
Two Deuce being a casino dealer
but I can't make the connection

and Althea what's-her-name hoards
something-or-other
I forget what along with her last name
all these instances I adduce
were adding up to make some sort of point
witty and pungent and maybe incisive
that I have mislaid

(excuse me I need to collect my thoughts)



Drawing by Constance Smutz

Pilot Snakes (for David Rash)

Ron Rash

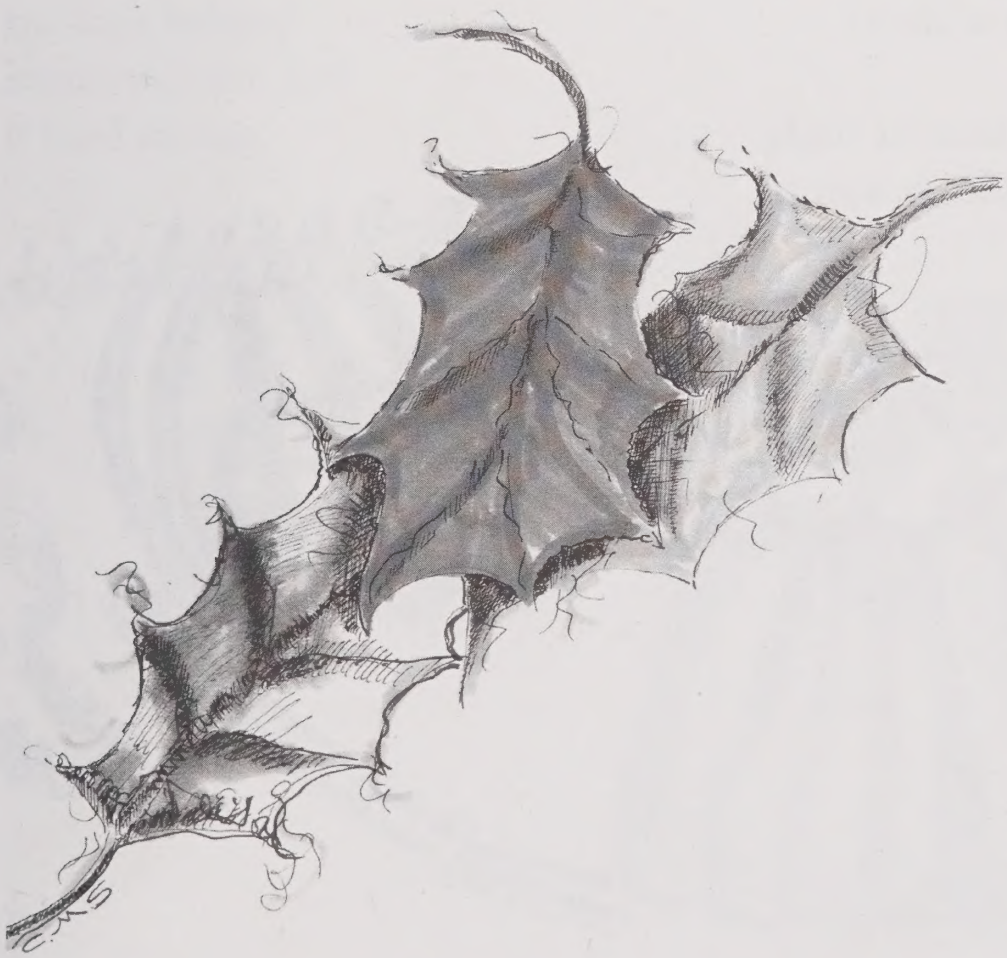
Come fall the copperheads first
make their migration into
rock-cracks, the dark underneath
of their lost warm world. Later
that twined nestball of cold blood
thickened with rattlers, and all
the old farmers and hunters
called those first hibernators
pilot snakes, believing them
sent out as scouts to find dens
for larger vipers, knowing
not just where to go but when,
and though books said *like saddles*
one child believed not saddles
but sand-clocks hauled on their backs

Drawing by Constance Smutz

The Code

Ron Rash

The code said any man who asked received
more than food and shelter, safety too,
so when a stranger came out of the night
with blood upon his shirt, MacGregor knew
what his obligations were and shared
his hearth and meat and whiskey. Soon enough
a pack of hounds leaped baying at the door,
with them men who shared MacGregor's name,
kin seeking one who killed one of their own.
The old man turned them back into the dark,
then led his guest across the hills to where
a boat could be procured. There on that shore
one favor would be asked, a favor granted:
MacGregor dipped the shirt into the loch,
washed his only son's blood from the cloth.



Drawing by Constance Smutz

Excerpts from a work in progress: *Thanks for the Dark but That's Not Home: Poems and Stories*

Close to the Bone

"To get there you have to go in deep."
Maxine Kumin

Through a splash
of autumn leaves

a ghost of a Union soldier
sees in an opening

what he believes to be
a flash of Confederate gray

Going deeper he detects
the stench of decay

Coming closer he finds
curled inside the carcass

of a dead horse
a possum, sleeping

Drawing by Constance Smutz

Soiled Doves

Nancy Dillingham

Civil war raging
we ply our trade
for life and livelihood
giving comfort and aid
to enemy and ally alike

In New Orleans
and Washington brothels
we feather our nests

sanctioned by both sides—
they make us legal
for a while—
some of us even spy

Dying young
(like the soldiers)
we leave behind
innocents who find
it hard to sing

Drawing by Constance Smutz

Rank Strangers (Owed to Sharyn McCrumb)

Nancy Dillingham

When they took
away our salt
to force us
to enlist

we citizens
of Shelton Laurel
stole back
our own supply

Renegades tortured
us for a week
then took our young boys
and old men

to an open field
and shot them

and the baby
they placed
out in the cold
bloomed like a rose
in the snow

"Sand Angel"
Photo by Jackie Searcy

Wicker Basket

Cathy James

Babies look like angels when they die. I think, long ago, when artists searched out inspiration for their images of angels in all those venerated paintings they must have been awed by the faces of their own dead children. In ages when infant mortality was so high, everyone must have carried the imprint of a beloved child in her heart. How it must have colored her view of life. It makes sense that the angels we see immortalized in stained glass windows in churches and in oil paintings in museums are the faces of the children who passed before us.

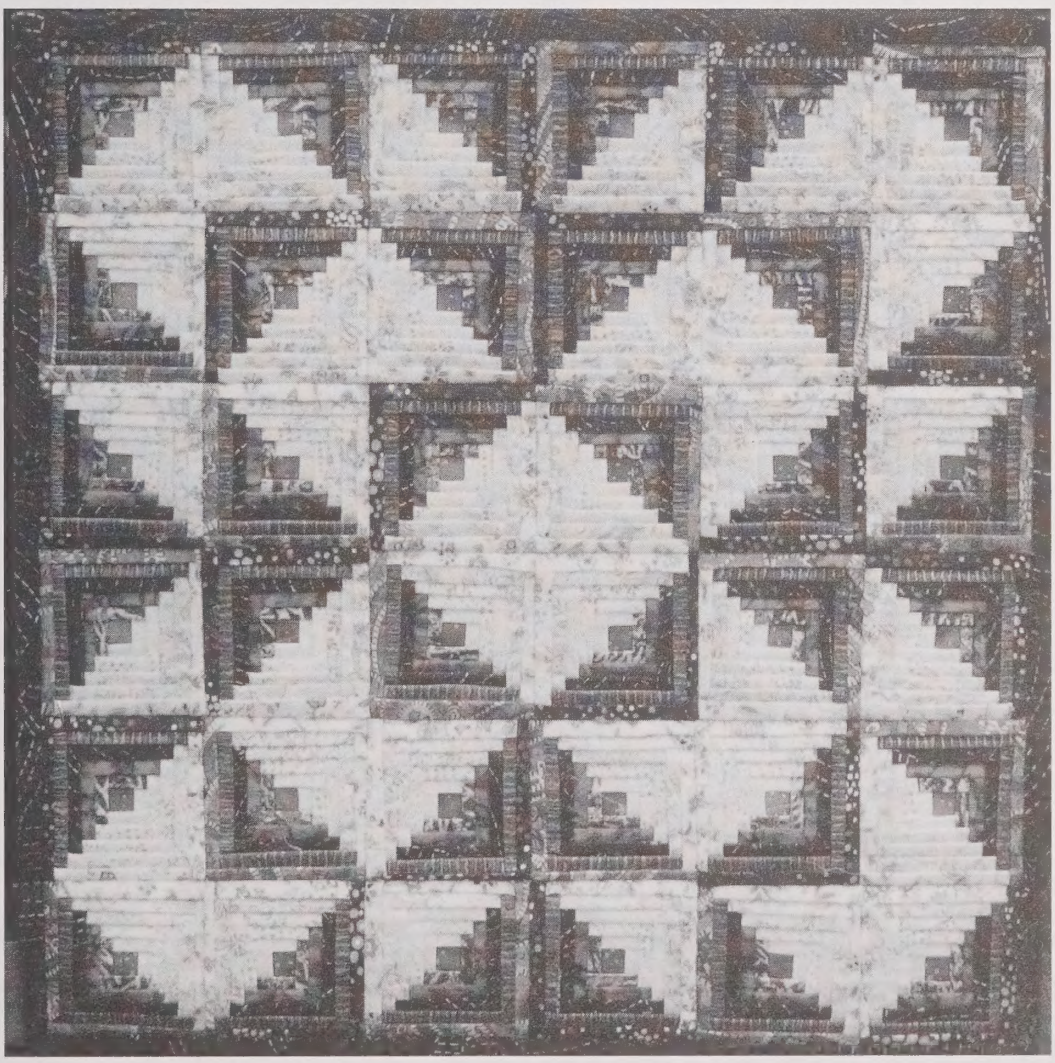
We buried my brother's only child this afternoon; he would have been seven months old today. It was the first time I had ever gone through the ritual of a family burial. I always thought it would be an older member of the family, like a grandmother, or even a parent, but on this Sunday we gathered for my nephew Jason, lying in a white box no bigger than my wicker laundry basket. When my own son was the same age, I remember placing him in a basket of clean clothes one morning after he had fallen asleep in my arms. Looking down at Jason in that infant-sized casket, I shivered.

To my four-year-old daughter Caroline, my nephew appeared asleep with toys in his hands and a soft, blue bear tucked beside him. She told a visitor who approached him, "This is my cousin and he's dead in there," and then she reached down to pat his face while she hummed to herself. Perhaps, when you're four, death has no separation from life. She was the only spot of light in a crowd that pulsed in low, heaving sobs. She passed herself among us like a tiny candle, oblivious of the dark.

Of all the images I took with me from the funeral, I recall a single picture, like a short reel of a home movie. As we waited by our cars for the procession to the cemetery, the funeral director stepped out the side door of the chapel to a waiting, white hearse. He carried my nephew's casket in his hands, away from his body, mindfully and cautiously.

I thought of a basket of newly picked peaches from a garden that I would carry with steady hands so as not to bruise them. I could smell peaches, warm from the sun and ripe from the tree. I am not sure anyone else saw him carrying the casket that brief distance. In spite of all the ritual and ceremony of the funeral, I saw that one motion as the saddest and the most simple in its simplicity. Only one man was needed to carry such a small child. The image had a lack of drama that made it stand out like an old snapshot that you could not remember having taken. That white box must have been so light.

It could have been peaches. Sun-warmed peaches smelling like summer, like life. I could see my nephew, light as an angel on somebody's canvas.



"Glimpse of Spring"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin of
Janice Maddox's quilted wall hanging

Morning Run (for Daddy, 1943-1991)

Kelly E. Navies

dawn jog
our feet, legs n breath
their own rhythm section
as I struggle to keep up with your powerful stride
few words spoken
so much said

along the way
benign guard dogs bark in envy
at our unabashed freedom
me fifteen, you thirty-eight and in much better shape
even though I'm on my high school track team

soon
we reach the clearing in the hills
you call sacred
in silence we run in place
gazing out beyond the sharp tops of pines and wild brown grass
that rim the brightening sky

continuing on
we will race the last one hundred yards
dashing around the curve leading home
and you will win

finally
between deep intakes of cool morning air
we laugh out loud
waves
of pure joy
our love
bursting forth
like the new day

Drawing by Sandra Brugh Moore

Post-War Depression

Susan Snowden

I blamed Mother's madness on Madison Avenue ad men,
who convinced her problems dissolve in the rinse-and-spin cycle,
that glass-domed percolators and chromium pop-up toasters
provide push-button solutions to life's aggravations.

It was marketing whiz kids who filled Mother head
with June Cleaver dreams of greeting us each day
in a starched eyelet apron, her hair a perfect halo,
ready to assist us with projects and homework.

But cheery layouts in *Ladies' Home Journal*
never hinted at the boredom
that accompanies mechanization.
With little to do my mother went crazy,
fixated on "The Bomb" and communist invasion,
her main occupation watching Cronkite's reports
in bleak black and white on our RCA console.

Drumming manicured "Fire and Ice" fingernails,
she waited alone for her family to come home
to marvel at the fruits of her labor:
stain-free fluff-dried clothing,
time-baked TV dinners,
and a Manhattan for Daddy.

Progress

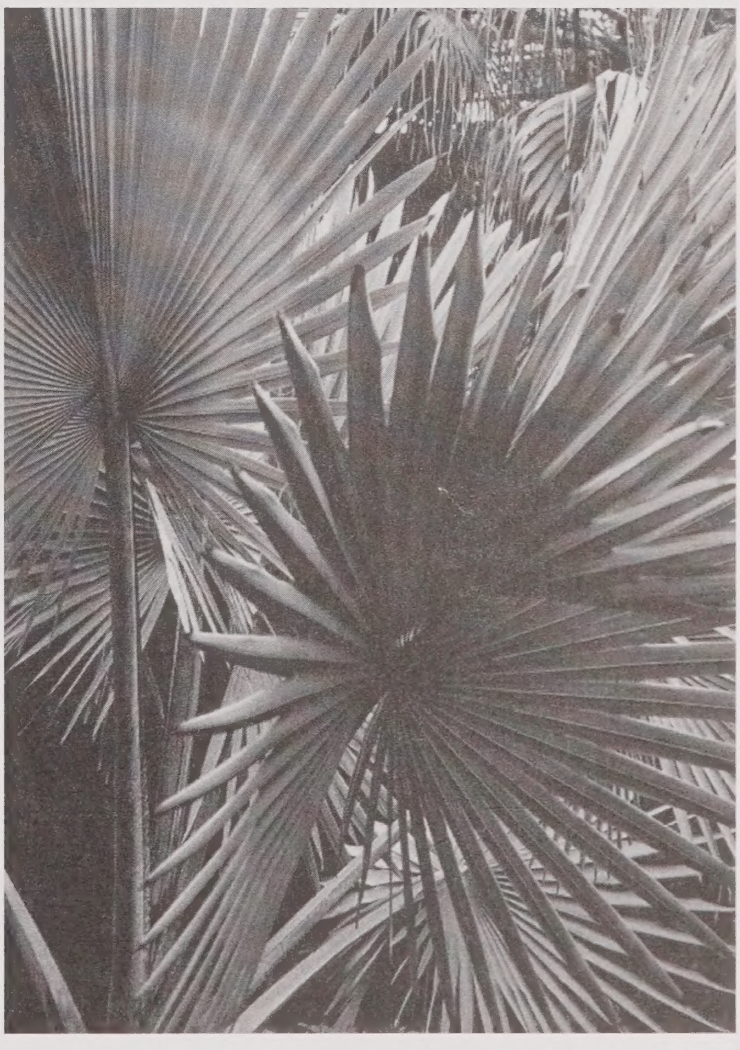
Susan Snowden

Sea grass leans in dawn breeze,
its rustle imagined
by the couple who watches
from a sealed hotel window.

A bulldozer shoves earth
into a tide pool,
groundwork for a building
of concrete and glass.

Deep in the water
fish glide,
turtles idle
as the darkness thickens.

Egrets peer down
from spindly palmettos,
rabbits scatter
toward the eight-lane highway.



"Palm Tree"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

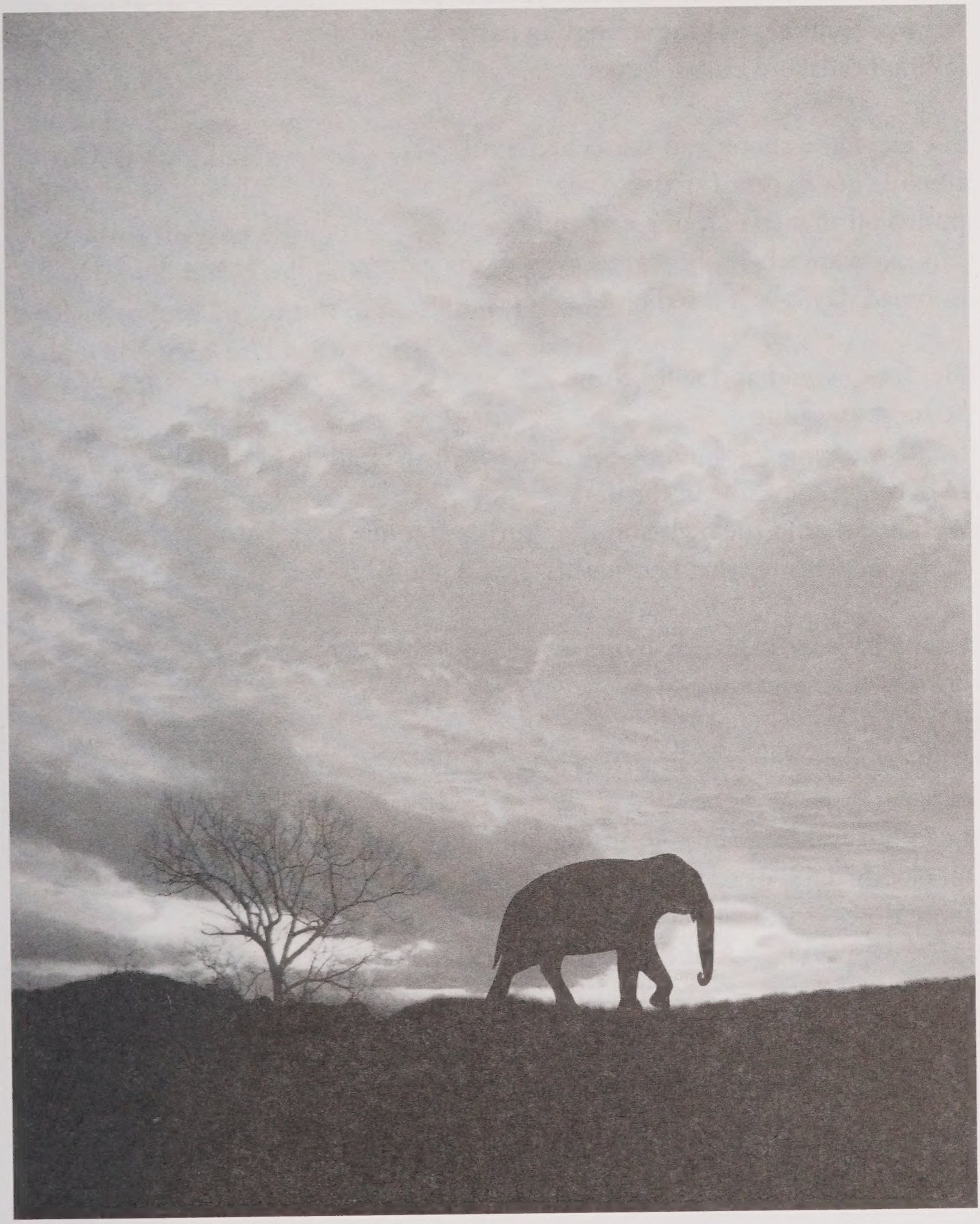
National Public Radio Report: Two Hundred Elephants Slaughtered in Cameroon

Susan Snowden

I am driving to work
a world away when I hear it,
yet I see that sweltering plain
Shimmering layers of color,
burnt umber, sage, yellow-gold,
the breast of the land
rising and falling,
the relentless sun overhead.

I picture the carcasses rotting:
Mothers toppled on calves,
gaping tusk sockets
caked with black blood,
flies moving together
shrouding the scourge.

Thich Nat Hahn
calls for compassion;
Bishop Tutu
preaches forgiveness.
But today a dark part of me argues.
I want to round up men,
fly to the Ivory Coast,
and rout out the poachers,
pin them down and pry out their teeth,
one by one, slowly, slowly.



"Elephant at Sunset"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

Thank You, Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Kathy Godfrey

There is a woman in me I never suspected.
She has been trying for years and years to peel
her way from behind the strangling pattern:
lolling heads and bulbous eyes.

She crept and shook and smooched until
I finally got to her. The two of us
pulled off that last bit of paper and now she
can creep anywhere she wants, even in the garden
in broad daylight if it strikes her fancy.

Her fancy could and will I think
be most anything
from swigging chardonnay from a bottle in the middle of the lake
to daring to be alone in the dark
with herself and the owls and the skittish moonlight.
Never wondering what her mother would say.

I don't have to be afraid anymore
of what might leak out of my pen, even
if it is pure pulsing blood.
If the reader can't take it, that is her own darkness to bare.

I can just write on through the dark into the light, or not
on cloudy days, or sometimes in and out again
more times than I can count because
it is a dappled day. And dappled days are writing days too.

On writing days a woman can take in
her own beauty. She can
sip it,
snort it,
smoke it
or stick it right into a fat blue vein.

And when she gets brave,
she can swill it and roll in it like a sweet pink sow with teats
aplenty to feed a yard full of squealing sucklings.
And when the world has its fill at her breast, she can stroll
Unfettered,
Filled, among the stars
skipping neatly around Saturn to avoid disturbing her rings.

I Never Wanted a Hero

Kathy Godfrey

Just a man to grow old with.
I don't need no Superman I'm no Lois Lane.
I don't need to be swept up on a pounding white stallion
whisked away to Never Never Land
Wonderland
Camelot
or long ago and faraway.
I don't need

Tens of thousands slain under my banner
lands spoiled and conquered for the love of my token.
I don't need tear-soaked letters from foreign wars,
purple hearts, bronze stars, blue ribbons, golden calves or swords.
I don't need the spoils of the conquered or the heads of their prophets.
I don't need martial arts, martial law or court martial,

No need
for uniforms, armors, or man-ness,
no need
for Eastwood, Hefner, or Trump,
no need
for palaces, eunuchs, or pure silk
to cushion my fragile ass like glass.
No needs at all.

Desires I have great slobbering hordes, bunched up jostling one another
for light so long
have I kept them down. My body longs for smooth warm hands,
airy touch ravenous clutch and cradling in barely morning,
tickling trails down my thighs, arms wrapped but loosely,
not quite a hold

heavy across my breasts
s
t
i
l
l
connected when it's over.

Even eyes fuzzy with the heat of me trying
to blink slow not to miss
me in this light.

My talking, talking, talking brain wishes for hearing and getting
and quieting and knowing and meeting and
time,
time.
time.

My heart chases healing dropping pieces on the trail
to find its way back to feeling,
to home,
even broken and bleeding
hoping
to stumble on raucous, throw-your-head back, kick-your-skirt-up
laughter,

wild conjuring cackles
tenyearoldJimmyhascooties
I can't breathe giggles.

Laugh
oh God
please laugh with me at the comedy
all that struggling and searching the part that is just me:
little and lame,
fierce and tame,
older than worlds,
innocent as the serpent
in Paradise.

Laugh.

That's all.

"Civil War Soldiers"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

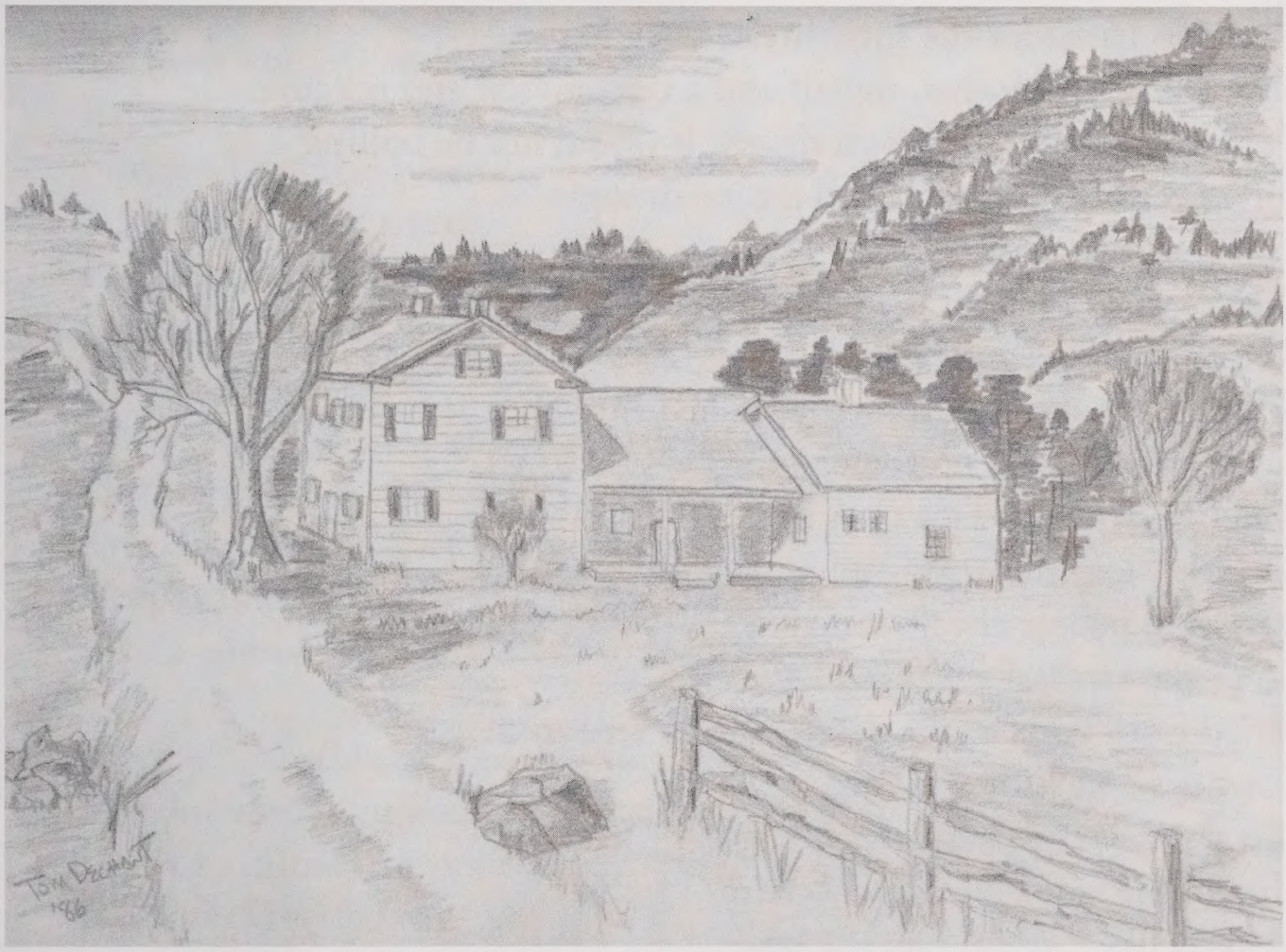
"Clouds with Rays"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

When I Wake

Kathy Godfrey

Warm yeast and peach preserves, and melting butter
I will wake early to birdsongs
Through screenless windows
Sheers will toss in the dawn breeze
Unafraid of looking foolish to the armoire
Will the birds sing in French?
Absolutment!
I will be too content to get out of bed
But my gut will whine of the late night
With only dancing and wine
So I will pull on a rumpled skirt
Leave my lover smiling twisted in the sheets
And run barefoot over stiff warm cobblestones
To the corner for bread and fruit
I might even skip and swing my skirt
Remembering too late my panties are also in the sheets.
The handsome vendor will nudge his lovely girl and whisper
En son jour, elle etait une beaute, n'est-ce pas?
Then smiling, address me *"Bonjour, Madamoiselle"*
Expecting a blush or correction or protest.

Instead I say *"Bonjour. Quatre croissants, s'il vous plait"*
He doesn't know that I **am** a girl
The kind that makes women want to smell my hair
And recall their child
The kind of girl old men shake their heads and chuckle over
I am the kind of girl that the man in the moon grieves
When he cannot see her in the shadow of the sun.
The kind of girl who smells bread and sighs
Shops barefoot with messy hair
Dumps strawberries on her sleeping husband
And feeds him from her skirt
I am the kind of girl he still dreams of when
No one would know if he didn't
And I will wake in Paris and think,
I remember when this day was only a poem.



Drawing by Tom Dechant

Colors

Amy Goodman-Bide

If I were adrift on a sea, it would be stormy, filled with mourning
As if that were a color
Each rise and dip, the tide assists in
Bringing me closer
A man came to me in a dream
He was the Buddha, he said
Or the Christ or Allah or God
Any name I chose to give
I gave no name
I have no name for the tiny thread sewn between
Myself and my mother, myself and a tree, myself and my love.
If I were to wander in a vast desert, it would not be boiling
Full of toiling dust, trying to escape drought
As if that were a color
The desert has caught me before, lulled me before
To its dry creeks and cyclical floods
When I talk about it, something like heartache catches in my throat
I can't believe I got on the plane
Watched my love's face turn to stone
Because I looked back again and again
In stories, people always return, get off the plane
Go to the arms of a waiting lover
I cried from Paris to the desert, the American desert
Cowboys and strong women
Dirt the color of heartache
Mountains as purple as they claimed to be
I waited like a wound on the land
As if that were a color.

Dirty Toes

Amy Goodman-Bide

My feet dig deep in the dirt
Searching for the cool center
Of summer in the South.
Toenails emerge, ripe with red soil
Ankles flushed with demon chiggers
Those little diamond diggers
That burst through skin and flesh
I become home and parent to
Nature's smallest assassin.

This wet heat expands veins
Expands visions
I dream I am the queen
Of locusts and crickets
Fireflies and moths
Giggles of brooks
And gaggles of geese.
Nature and I, we are swollen with summer
Our tongues lagging before lips
Eyes drooping against the pull of gravity
Sleep washes over me
Like a winter stream.

Even in heat, this land has rhythm.
It teems with wings and
Legs like miniature violins
It is littered with song.
They break my heart
All those tiny songs
They break me like a slide guitar
On a long drive home
When the sun bears down
On my eyes
And love croons in the passenger seat.

Eyes closed, I curl my toes
Into the center of the earth
Where the cold begins
I just barely touch
The whisper of something simple.
I can almost feel the soft breath
That encompasses her like a metaphor.

Drawing by Sandra Brugh Moore

Dusk

Will Hooper

On summer afternoons sunlight glares through my daughter's window
in dusty yellow shafts, striking precisely on her television's face.

My legs—they ain't much use no more. But my fingers can dance
all over this remote control; I can change the channels and mute the ads.

My daughter feeds me at noon; we watch the news together. I can watch
anything I please, from *The Guiding Light* to *The Price Is Right.*

Today, I please to watch the wet summer sun melt over a brown grassy
hill and my ten-year-old toes curl and dig into the cool, black earth

and a strange, thin cow shadow stroll lazily across the hill,
its head kneeling down to meet the cow's head where they graze together—

almost anything.

On a Sunday winter morning in 1923 me and my mama walked to church
to the rhythm of the church's bells, crushing ice flowers on a dirt road.

Those frozen crystal shafts shined prism-like colors in the icy new sun.
The cold squeezed them from the red clay and I picked them like flowers

and held them so they melted in my palm's warmth and drained dirty down my fingers.
But I can't get my fingers wet while I use this remote control—it'll short out.

In the evening I sit at the window in these dusty yellow shafts—
within my shuddering ribs I feel the sand trickle down.

Ode to a Kitten

Carolyn Pidgeon

Wobbling on fuzzy new legs
the dusky grey kitten
pads in his milk,
then douses
nose and whiskers
in the white pool,
the creamy drops
making a goatee
of his tender chin.

Too soon such enchanting confusion
will vanish,
in the grown and sleek cat's perfect manners.

Drawing by Tom Dechant

A Memory

Carolyn Pidgeon

Haven't got one sweet thought,
not one,
for you.
All those feelings
once a warm brick inside,
just dry crumbles now
and red dust.

But sometimes
the dart
of a hummingbird
startles a memory
of what I thought was you.
My heart races
with the rhythm of its wings.
Ruby and iridescent green
splash before my eyes.
And I tremble
for what should have been.

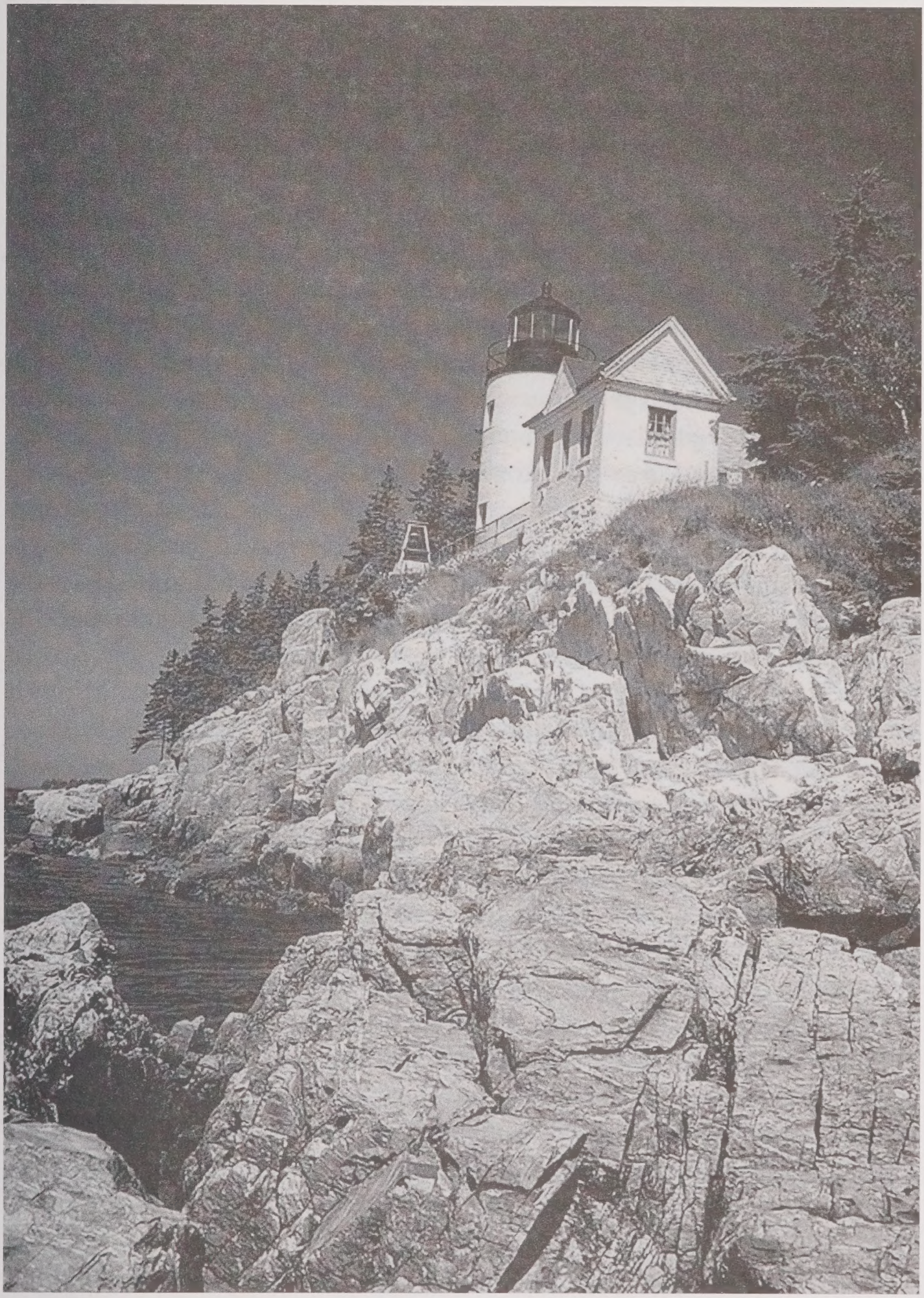
Fate

Julia Nunnally Duncan

She believed in the old ways
didn't put stock in modern notions
of coincidence or in confused explanations
of the *odd* that a teacher might offer.
It was powers she'd heard of as a child,
such as the placing of a hand on a wart
and rubbing in some concoction
passed down from mama to daughter
to remove the growth,
that she trusted.
It was a gift some women had—
her own great-aunt witness to
such magic
though she died from the taking of her mole—
melanoma a doctor would say;
Why did she let someone tamper with
it that way?
Yet still that death didn't change
her family's belief in the power.
So when she first saw the man on Main Street
and knew beyond a shadow of a doubt
that he was what she wanted,
she searched her mind for recollections
of tales told in her earliest days—
whispered stories on summer front porches
of fireballs and panthers
and spells—
and she set her mind on getting him.
In the shadows of her cold room at night
for two solid weeks
she lit a candle
and held her hand up

as if taking a vow
or swearing an oath
and closed her blue eyes tight.
Think about me, she whispered
and held the image of his face
in her mind.
Want me, she said,
(as I want you).
She chanted this until the wee hours,
her throat so sore she couldn't swallow
and until the candle wick drowned in the
pool of wax and she was left
in moonless dark.
In bed, warmed by a covering of quilts
her great-grandma had stitched
eighty years before,
she thought of the man's dark eyes,
his curly black hair;
his clean, crisply laundered white shirt
and overcoat
that a banker wore.
And she forgot that he might feel
too good for the likes of her
(why, down their noses
the tellers looked
when she sneaked in to get a glimpse
of him).
Never mind.
A December Friday evening when she
stood outside the First National Bank
and waited for him to come out
of the tall glass doors,
lo and behold
he stepped outside

stood on the street
and looked straight at her
though she didn't call his name
Fate (such a fine and pretty name!)
and he held her gaze.
His eyes did not leave hers for some time.
Thank you, Lord,
she said,
looking up into the gray sky,
her eyes blurred with tears;
Thank you, Lord
(though she knew Jesus might not have been
the cause of her good fortune)
and she held her hand over her heart
for a moment
and then over her mouth
to cover the grin that she couldn't stop.
He took an interest in me,
she thought
and watched him turn and walk down the street,
cut the corner by the Rexall Drug Store
and disappear.
I'll have you in my bed before it's over,
my darlin' Fate,
she thought
and started the long walk home.



Bass Harbor Light, SW Harbor, Maine
Photo by Lee Schleining

Glory Days

Chris Fay

Naturally, I remember certain milestones in my life (my first home run, hockey goal, touchdown, and kiss) as though they occurred last month. And so it is with the first time my name made it onto a newspaper's sports page.

I was one of only three sophomores promoted to the varsity on my high school's baseball team. Unfortunately, it was a team deep with junior and senior talent, and while I was coming along as a shortstop, the senior I was playing behind was a very talented four-sport athlete. I usually made it into a game only when we were either up or down a minimum of ten or twelve runs. About mid-season, though, our star shortstop was ailing from injuries incurred in another sport. Just before a Friday afternoon game with one of our big rivals, he had to have both of his knees drained and was unable to play. As I was dressing out at my locker for yet another day sitting on the bench, our coach came up and told me he was in a jam and had to start me at shortstop today. He was emphatic that he had never started a sophomore before, and this could well be the last time, but that was up to me. Nothing like a little motivation to bring out a better performance, huh?

Most of the game went uneventfully, at least at my position. We were losing to a better team, but not badly. Then, in the seventh or eighth inning, we found ourselves in the field with the bases loaded, no outs and our usually great pitcher John Konitzer losing his stuff. I was not unfamiliar with situations like these, having grown up watching and playing baseball. In fact, I had turned many double plays in little league and community center ball. This, however, was a golden opportunity, given my tenure on the team. A couple of pitches later, the batter hit an extremely hard line drive up the middle. Konitzer tried feebly to get a glove on it, to no avail. I shot out of my crouch to my left, glove extended toward second base. I watched and felt the ball go solidly into the pocket … that's one out. The runner at second had left way too early, and I was in position to step on the bag behind him … that's two outs. By now I found myself off the line between first and second base and, like the runner before

him, the guy formerly on first base had assumed "base hit up the middle" and left too soon. This was too easy; all I had to do was make a good throw to first, so I stared at the first baseman's chest and delivered a short, crisp throw. Triple play!

All 20 to 25 spectators, mostly fellow students, went wild. Only my wannabe/not-quite girlfriend seemed confused about the significance of what had just occurred. Every member of my team ran to where I was standing and heartily slapped me on my back and head. Coach was still in the dugout, but clearly pleased. Disarmed and shocked, the other team (mostly seniors) looked toward the umpires who could easily erase the play by determining that I had missed the tag out at second. No, the umpires turned their backs to go to the backstop, and the play stood.

Whatever happened the rest of the game and over the next twelve hours could not have transpired fast enough; I eagerly awaited the delivery of the next morning's newspaper. I barely slept, envisioning a front-page account of the rarest of all events in baseball having occurred locally. And by a backup player trying to establish himself on the team, no less. I couldn't decide if my name would lead the story, show up in the headlines and then again in the latter paragraphs, or perhaps get its own sidebar story all by itself. As dawn broke, I was standing at the front window trying not to look too eagerly for the paperboy. As he came down the street throwing the paper, I'm sure I caught mine after its first bounce onto the driveway. Nothing on page one … or page two, but page three, with all the high school box scores … let's see, hey, a two-paragraph story on our game. Second paragraph began with "a triple play begun by reserve shortstop Chris Fry ("FRY"?), ("begun by"? … I had completed it, hadn't I?). I scanned the rest of the article, taking in none of it. FRY? How could this have happened? I had my name on my back: "F-A-Y." "17." Surely Coach Gallassinni had given them my name correctly, right? They never misspelled his name. They could have gotten it off the umpire's

lineup card or the scorekeeper's book which had our entire name, number and position. "FRY"? No, my name was mentioned twice, misspelled in the box scores too, as well as in the one-sentence account of my heroics. Obviously an inexperienced writer had not grasped the significance of what had occurred. I staggered through the front door and into the foyer, feeling like I had been hit by a truck. "Is it in there, dear?" my mother asked from the kitchen. I was still staring incredulously at what was supposed to be my name and thinking if I looked at it long enough, perhaps it would change itself. "Who do you call when a mistake of this size gets made in the paper?" I growled. "Let's me see, honey," she said, relieving me of the betrayal I held in my hands. "Well, dear, you're awfully new at this kind of thing; I'm sure they'll get it right next time." "Next time? I'll be ninety the next time I make a triple play."

The next few weeks went along like much of the season had, with me playing sporadically and well enough but neither hitting or fielding like the star of the team I was playing behind on the roster. Toward the end of the season, the same sportswriter called my parents' home wanting to include me in a story of upcoming players to watch locally in the next couple of years. He wanted to speak with me personally, if that was okay. My mother handed me the phone, telling me who it was calling. My greeting was "How could you mess up a name with only three letters in it?" Obviously the passage of time had done little to ease the sting. There was a pause on the other end of the phone while my mother screeched at me to "be civilized." The pause on the phone was followed by "I'm sorry, son; have we met?" This was clearly not the sound of a man meaning to pierce my heart with an arrow, but a rather pleasant-sounding young guy. The rest of the conversation went pretty well, with the writer promising to personally check the copy before it went to print to ensure I was not damaged again.

I've been the subject of many other press accounts, predominantly because of my twenty-something-year career in law enforcement. The sting dissipated long ago to the point where I hardly notice anymore if the names or facts show up in print incorrectly. Still, I save them all, except that I also recall tossing that first one into the kitchen trash can as though it had been written for some other unknown person, on the other side of the world. But, in my memory, that triple play still made me the local hero for the week.

Pies

Jennifer Browning

Thanksgiving has always been a big deal at our house.
That day of the year when grandmama,
then mom,
then I
get to show our affection through food.

Everyone gets his own pie.
Joey gets chocolate,
Jamie gets lemon,
Daddy minced meat.
When Uncle Steve came, it was coconut crème;
When Uncle Bill came, there was a second chocolate.
The women and girls seldom got a pie. We got
whatever.

Mom changed it some.
For the two of us, there was always cake,
usually pineapple upside-down cake,
the brown sugar crystallized down the side,
the heavy iron skillet turned over by Daddy
'cause it was too heavy for Mom to lift
and turn the cake out onto the plate.

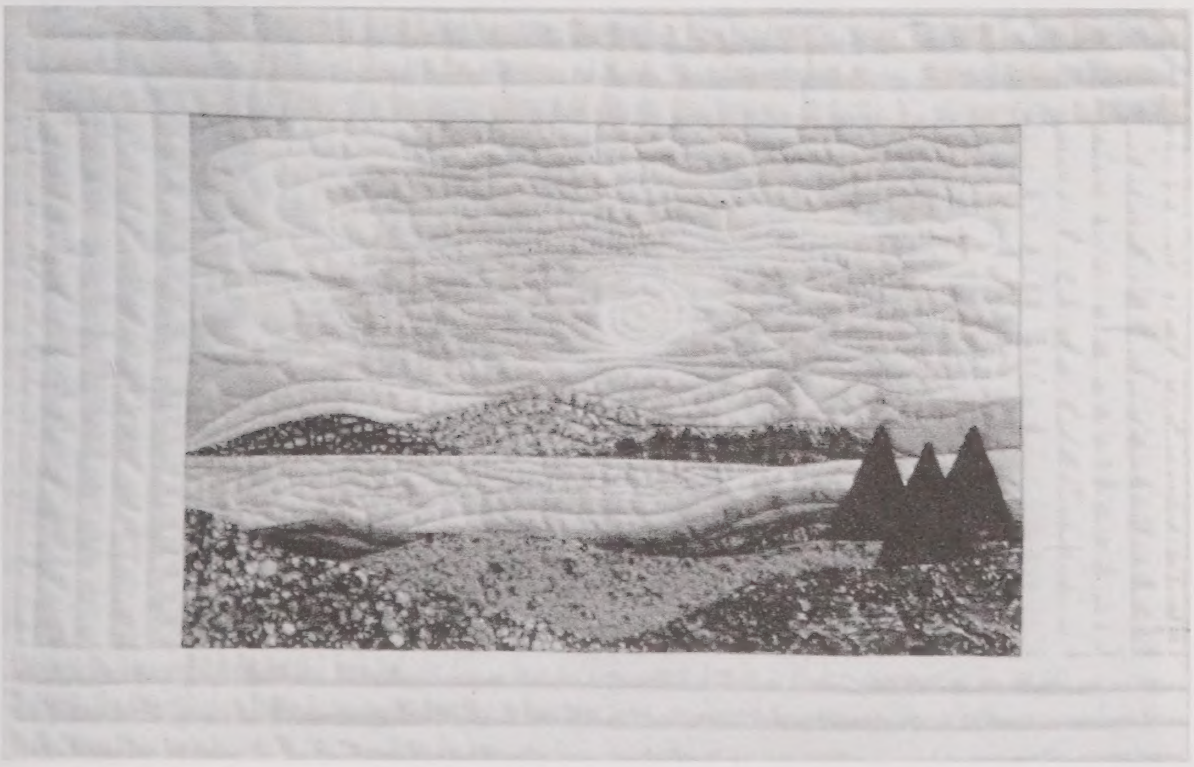
I've made my own changes.
Now, there are friends invited too,
and there isn't as much family.
The canned cranberries in their congealed
wobbly state have been relegated to the Manna bag.
Now, it's red velvet instead of pineapple.
Daddy's not there to lift the skillet any more.

But when I say the blessing,
Mom and Daddy are still there.
Mom will be watching as I make her special dressing.
Daddy will still want to sneak a bite.

He just can't tell me if it's
too salty,
too sage-y,
too bland.
The dressing bowl, the huge plastic green one
used for as many years as I've been alive,
will heave with its load of cornbread, onions,
celery and broth. Poured out of its stomach
will be the smells of my holiday memories.

The pies this year are not as numerous.
Joey will still get chocolate, Jamie lemon.

Me?
I'll have cake—just like my mommie taught me.



"Wildflowers among the Cabins"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin of quilt by Janice Maddox

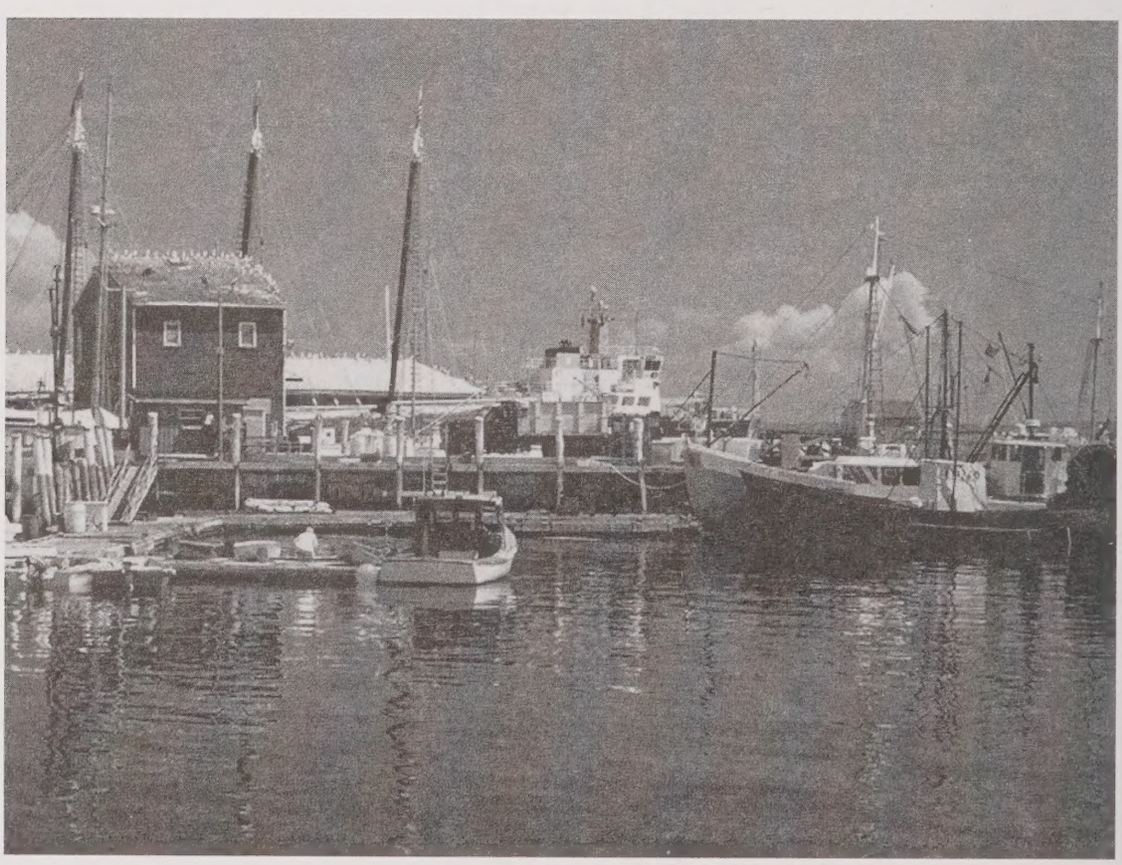
Your Roof

Jennifer Browning

"Shall we dance?" you said.
"Sure," I replied.

I wanted to float away on a Harlequin romance
Except
of course
my feet hurt
I felt fat
I wondered if the shrimp were still on my breath or
if you'd feel the bead of sweat on your palm
nestled in the small of my back.

Your Irish eyes looked into mine
Grace Kelly
Bing Crosby
"True Love" floating on the air.
I stubbed my toe.



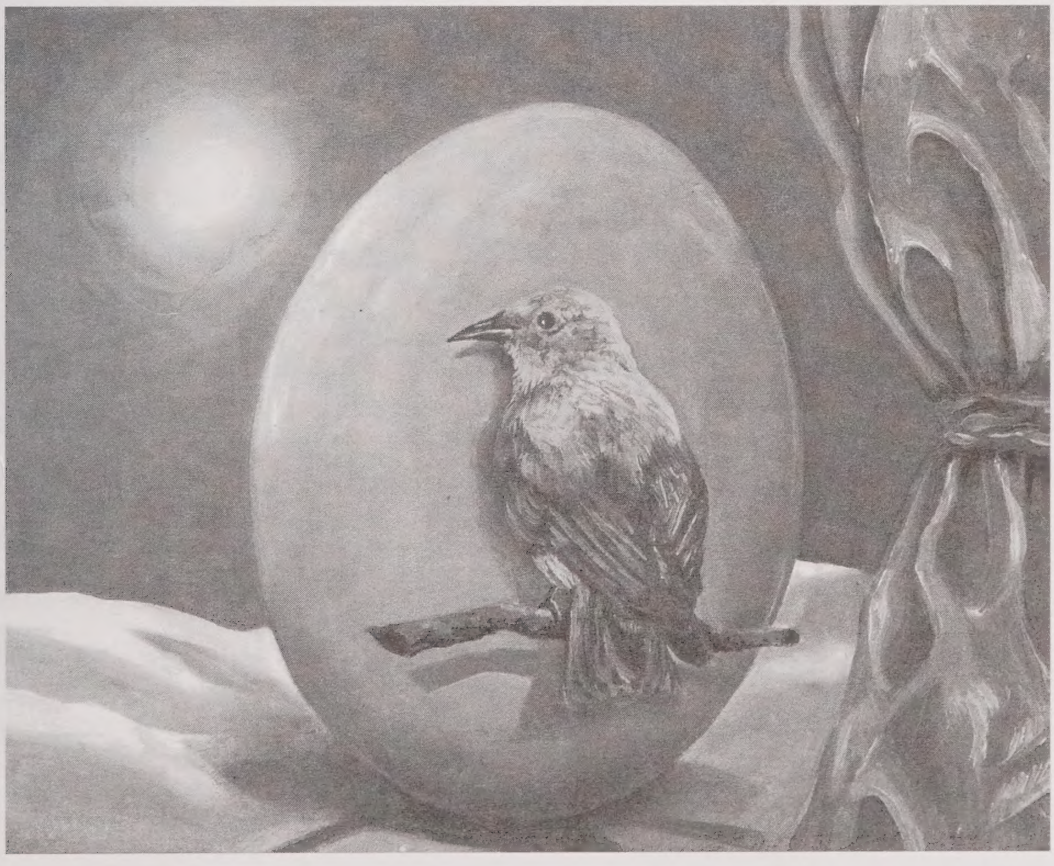
Rockland Harbor, Maine
Photo by Lee Schleining

Something-er

Jennifer Browning

I used to wish upon stars every night.
I was convinced that I if I believed it strongly enough,
it would happen—
wish to be
prettier,
skinnier,
smarter,
something-er—
wish for someone to be there, wish to be somewhere else.
I don't wish on them anymore.
Wishing only makes the void more noticeable.
Now I just look at them when I think about it.

A lot of the time, I don't think of it.
I take the dog out, watch her poop,
but never once do I look up.
I'm sure that says something about me . . .
I'm more likely to look at shit than beauty.



"Interlude with One Bluebird"
Oil on canvas by Fleta Monaghan

A Blank Page

Jennifer Browning

How intimidating.
Of course,
one is tempted just to drivel.

But, there's so much potential
in a blank page.
So much room to blather and
dream.

I can be anyone on a blank page.
Nothing that came before counts;
nothing that comes after matters.

What will it reveal?
Will I suddenly be whatever it is
I'm supposed to be?
Or, will I regurgitate and be the
same old same old?

I have so much potential for change
on a blank page.
No one has preconceived notions—
Least of all me.

There is freedom in that.
There is fear in that.
What if I can't fill it?
What if I end up with something horrible?

Grace

Heather K. Vaughn

He bowed his head saying alleluia.
What did ya say that for grandpa?
Looking at the blond-haired girl
thick braid falling down the center of her back
eyes neither blue or brown a color he could
never transfix in his mind
looking at him.
He had forgotten she was there.
Unlike other children that age
running ahead grabbing leaves or sticks
and bringing them back for inspection
Alex always trotted along quietly
bare feet leaving her
wispy imprints in the dirt.
I dunno, he replied clearing his throat
Sometime I see things on my walk that strikes me
a particular way.
Her eyes, perplexed, watched
her feet move beside her grandfather's.
She took a deep breath
having thought for a moment;
like what, grandpa?
He had been opposed to taking her along
on these afternoon walks, the time he meant to have for himself
away from his wife's loud television
and the phone with people trying to sell him credit.
He was the type of man that thought
he made sense only to himself.
Oh, I dunno, just now
I was looking over yonder
right above that mountain range, see?

And, ah I noticed the birds, geese
probably, flying V-shaped, headin' for
warmer weather and then came up that wind,
and I heard it go through the trees.
He glanced sideways seeing if she was listening.
Her yes held a far away look towards Seven Sisters
And ya get a particu-lar feeling? she asked
tilting her head to one side
breathing in a sigh.
Well, I never could stand church goin' religion.
Me and God came to understand one another
when I wasn't no bigger than you.
Alex sometimes I
and then he stopped and caught his breath.
She stopped
and stood in front of him
shielding her hand over her eyes from the sun
waiting.
I walk and I listen to the wind
in the trees, hear the leaves
I hear somethin'
like some spirit watching over
the good things.
Like I don't have to worry so much
or be sad, just grateful
to have heard.
Alex looked at her grandpa's
white mustache and his eyes
that drooped some from the weight
of the tendriled wiry gray eyebrows.
His entire face clung to a calm
wonderment of the path they walked.

Yeah, I know what you mean grandpa
She said slipping her hand into his
and giving a squeeze then
kicking a round stone into a bed of moss
both of them looking
at the path ahead.

"Trees, Geese, and Clouds"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

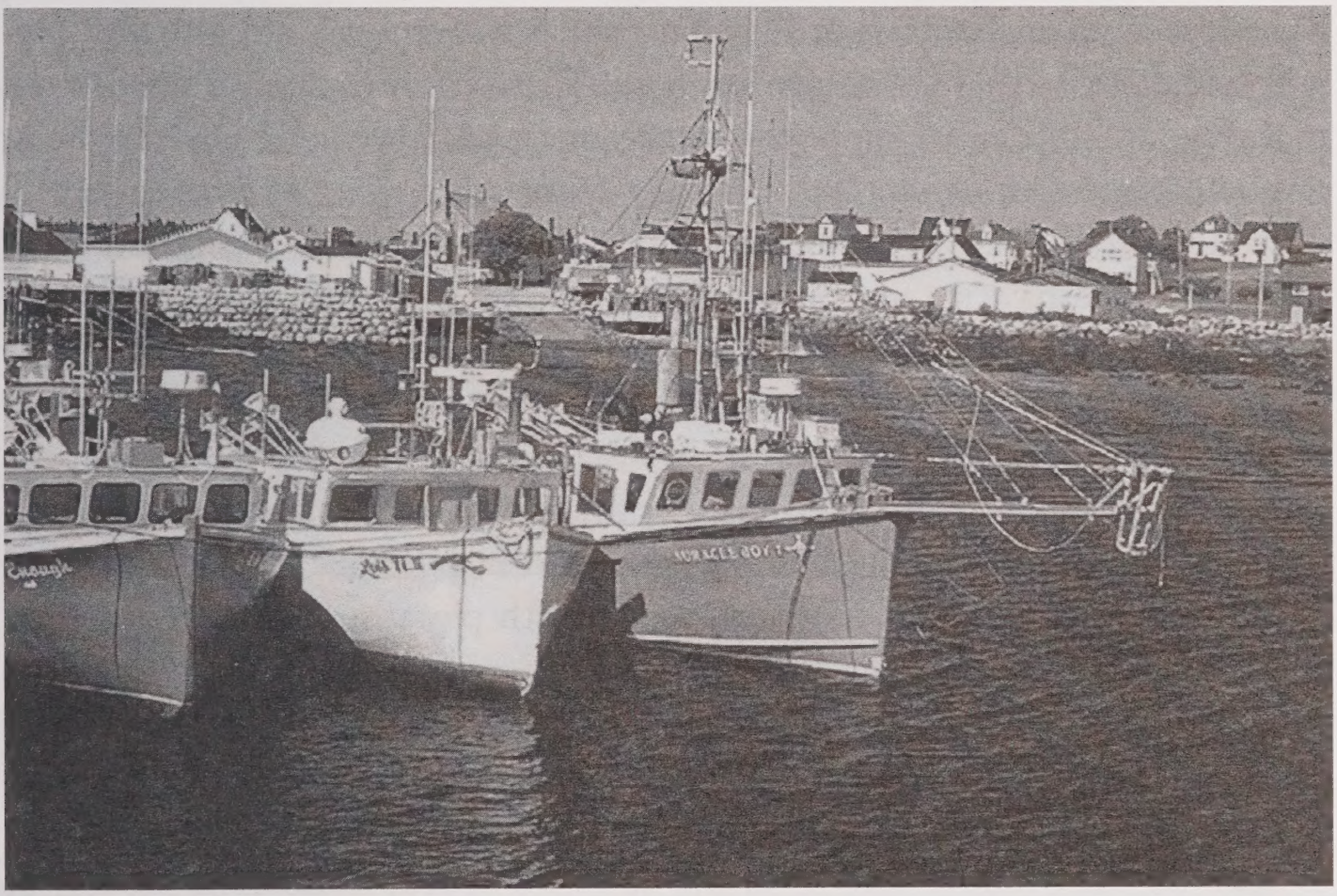
At Home

Heather K. Vaughn

At home on holiday,
I hear her late at night cleaning the kitchen, pacing the hallway
Finally clicking off the lights.
I hear her pull back the sheets and slump into bed.
The house settles into awkward silence.
I know she's awake, lying next to my snoring father, thinking
Of my life and all the mistakes.

The next day,
When I come downstairs, I see her eyes are tired.
She sips her coffee as she kneads bread for dinner.
She clears her throat and says,
"I don't understand you. Why do you waste your life away?
You're young; you should have fun.
You're going to end up alone. Do you hear me?
You're going to be alone. And that boy now, he's not it; I know it.
In ten years, you're going to wake up and it'll be too late.
Talk to me.
Why don't you tell me what goes through that mind of yours?
I swear I don't know you."

She says this, kneading the bread in punches, every morning.
Some mornings bring variations.
Some mornings she exhumes my mistakes, choices, recalling
The time I nearly became Jewish. My one-year engagement to a very stupid man.
She stirs up the two years I was a vegetarian, hanging with hippies.
She reminds me of all the masks and skins I've worn and discarded.
She reminds me she doesn't sleep for thinking of me.
My eyes, exactly like my mother's, glue themselves to the floor,
Searching at my feet for some concrete answer to her questions.
I have the answer my mother wants.
When I open my mouth, the words form themselves in a high-pitched "I'm sorry."



Shelbourne Harbor, Nova Scotia
Photo by Lee Schleining

My Muse Came from the Flea Market

Heather K. Vaughn

My Muse sleeps quiescently, resting her head on cloud-like bubbles of imagination, stirring only when she is bored.

The Muse is a spirit of inspiration with solemnity. A spirit? Really? I conjure images of a divine enchantress guiding hands and mind through corridors of chimerical journeys sometimes changing form into Shakespeare's succubus Queen Mab ignominiously doing what she pleases without regret or question. My Muse must be different.

My Muse is no enchantress or succubus; she is a seven-year-old girl with pigtails and freckles that cover just her nose. That imp wakes up at four in the morning, as I am stringing one sentence to another hoping I have an assertion concerning Sir Walter Scott's *Heart of the Midlothian* and subsequently dreaming I sound intelligent even though it is obvious at least a hundred white Protestant men have set up the "rules" for writing about Scott long before my creative misgenius took hold of his prose.

I connect my Muse to growing up in the South, how I feel about hubris raping the earth, and feminist voices singing—not as cherubs or angels, but as women. And through my philosophical inspirations and kaleidoscope past and present, I return to that little girl with pigtails, chocolate doe eyes, and freckles. Perhaps it is her innocence.

But my Muse is not innocent; it's more of a simplistic shy awareness. A grasping at what it means to listen to the wind run through the prairie grass, to open all the windows and lie in the darkness naked, to imagine the horror accomplished in the name of politics, to mind fuck with words just barely learned in a manuscript bound for nowhere.

That is what this spirit who mostly sleeps does when she is bored and alone and too full of inspiration to do little else. She looks around and screams in a whisper. My Muse is an amalgamation of what I have learned, what I have rejected, moralities of my parents, humility, and hours that I hated myself for.

My Muse is details, if anything. She observes the ladybug crawling up Great-Aunt Virginia's portrait in our living room, the rubber band always on the priest's left wrist, and the shrunken, bent-aged woman in a pink bathrobe pushing a shopping cart with a scraggly-ass poodle in the basket.

My Muse is the colors, the sounds, and the smells in writing. My Muse belongs to no heavenly creation; she is some sort of a tatterdemalion I found wandering in a secondhand bazaar. I worry little about what my Muse is. It is the *who* that I spend a great deal of time wondering about.

The spirit that twists my mind so many ways, sleeping through the important term papers and waking up to spew only poetry for which I get no grade at all, my Muse is selective and stingy. My Muse comes from years and years of wandering in a marketplace where advice comes in paperbacks, half price, torn covers, telling me to sell my soul for the sake of writing.

When the bus changes everything

Carol Dearing

I sit on that bus
That smells like vinyl and sweat
--just avoid the back
Where the mean people sit and slit
Open the backs of the seats with huge knives.
I move slowly, slowly
To the front of the bus
As I can
  as they leave
And stare—every day—
In wonder
At the calm grassy lawn, the boxy shrubs, the ranches, the split-levels, the two
stories with columns on the clean front porch, the lit driveways, the covered boats
I can smell the clean new foyers
Hear the fine old clocks ticking
See the tailored draped curtains.

Then we turn down the highway
And it's just me and Mrs. Golda
(the strong bus driver with too much hair)
I'm her favorite
Because I'm the last
And at my stop we sit still and listen
To the clickety click of the blinker
And look down my dark overgrown driveway
Where the branches pester my face
And the roots look like snakes,
Or
The snakes look like roots.
"Well, it's the end of the line, girl!"

Swimming with This Boy

Carol Dearing

No boy ever asked me
So I say yeah
I run inside (I can't breathe)
Put on my suit.

I start at the river to jump in
But he stops me—what's this?
A scar turned purple and thick like a worm on my thigh.
I climb out of the pool of water from a rock—it's cold cold!
What's this—his head all cockeyed,
Worn off polish on my toes.
I rub the towel all over my head.
He touches the top of my head—what's this here?
I got a sunburn, now it's peeling from my scalp.
We jump in on 3 count
I see him staring at my moving legs underwater
My blue-white legs
The same color of skim milk
bad grocery store light
or dead people

We walk home, our skin all tight,
His hair combed and shiny like a baby seal
I think now he has a slanted opinion of me
His future plans watered down by what he spied.
I prattle along nervously about the abandoned house on the left, the pony with a
broken leg on the right, the time my uncle hit a goat with his truck right here
in the road
(I don't tell we ate it)
He listens, he nods, did he sigh?
Then he stops and tries to kiss me—(I can't breathe)

Grandpa's Sardines

Celia Miles

Grandpa drinking, Grandpa drunk
Staggering, stumbling, slipping down the doorframe
onto the front porch, yelling
Bring me some of them sardines
and crackers from the store.
(He never ate sardines with biscuits or cornbread.)

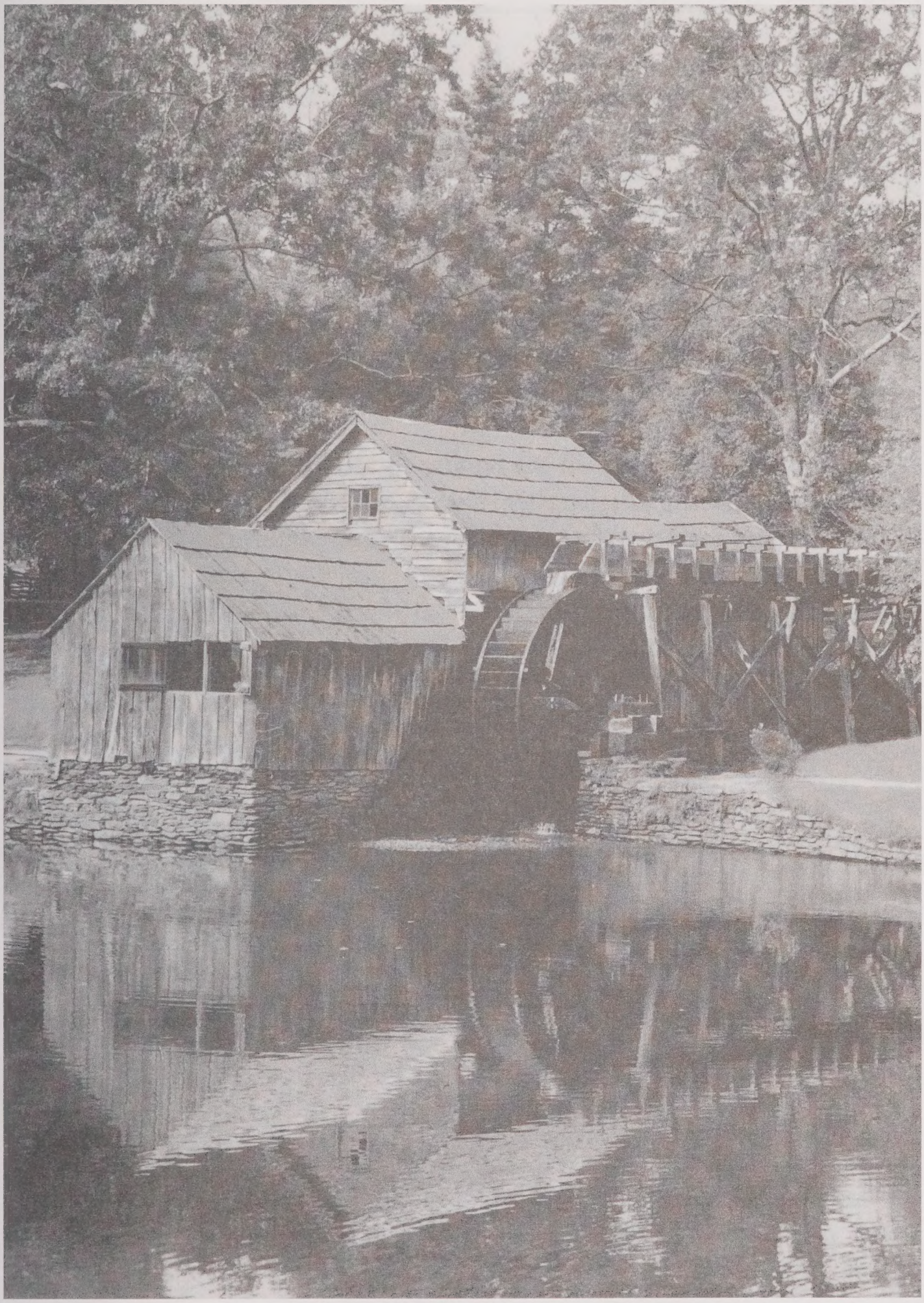
We batted tin cans with sticks of stove wood,
bent and studied and shot marbles in swept-dirt circles,
always aware but paying him no mind until he yelled.
Bring me some of them sardines, I said.

Once he'd fumbled with the little attached key,
bloodied his thumb,
fingered sardines from their oily bed
wiped his mouth with his hands,
his hands on his loose overalls, he'd slump
blocking the door, empty sardine tins all around.

Some day he might halfway straighten up
dig into his pockets, find loose change,
cuss-mumble and throw the coins to us
a royal gesture gone awry. "Away, the lot of you."

We watched his sprawling slumber, waited
for nickels and dimes that sometimes escaped his pockets
if he thrashed, dreaming, drooling;
waited for his awakening, for his surprise
to see us there, watching, but quietly so.

After he came to, he didn't want sardines.
And we had our grandpa back.



"Mabry Mill"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

Our Judacullah Friend
October 2004

Dara Llewellyn

We celebrate her all along the Parkway,
never finding Water Rock Knob,
moving from overlook to overlook

We accept nature's offering:
a small rock—her strength,
a tiny pine cone—her protective shield.
We light a candle for her beauty, her bravery, her will.

Earlier, we held her ashes in our hands,
letting the dust slip away in the wind,
flinging our memories after them.
Today, we stand together in the pines,
smell the resin, and
feel the loss of her light.

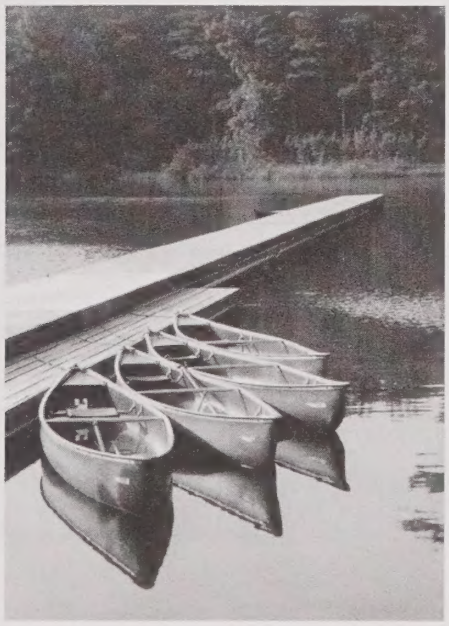
Drawing by Sandra Brugh Moore

Gabrielle Thompson

Trees reflect in a kaleidoscope of color
upon the zephyr-kissed surface of the river
umber, rust, vermilion, and gold fracture
in the sparkling mirror of the water's surface,
offering short-lived beauty in the chromatic light.

Pepper, tongue lolling from a smiling mouth
dripping tiny rainbows onto her silken, ebony coat,
studies the opposite bank.
Her ears perk and mouth closes, silencing her pant, as she watches
the movement of squirrels on the far shore.
With a glance at the chilly expanse of water,
she blinks away the thought of chase.

I bask beside her in the last remnant of fall's warmth,
watching the canoe on its tree-tether wave to and fro, to and fro
in the breeze that beckons us to further adventure.
It cannot shake me from my complacency,
from feeling content just to be.



"Summer's End"
Photo by Shirley McLaughlin

Day after Day

Kenet Adamson

My alarm clangs alerting me that I'm late.
My sons need breakfast, lunches need packing, and the dog needs a walk.
My school starts in minutes and I'm not half-dressed.

The boys pour forth from car doors to school sidewalks
While the radio reminds me to scurry to work.
I flop in my office and drop behind my desk.

No matter to whom I am speaking, they are wrong person, wrong place, wrong time.
Students want schooling, advisees desire advising, colleagues crave counseling,
And administrators demand that attention must be paid.

Now, sons need to be picked up, packed in cars,
and placed at tables for procrastination.
Homework is stupid, and the dog needs a walk.

Costumes changes, snatches of conversation
And we're back out the door for sports.
Summer and winter, they swim. Fall and spring are soccer.

We dash home to choke down dinner.
Instruments are practiced, dishes pile up,
And the aerobic attempts at showering boys begin.

Of each book, to each son, we read a few pages,
But the clock states it is too late
Tomorrow will be better, just wait.

Dishes are stuffed in the dishwasher.
Counters are wiped and one last attempt
To conquer the laundry pile fails.

It's too late to read, relax or romance.
Tomorrow night we'll date, dance and dine.
But tonight the dog needs a walk, and it's already midnight.

"Hands"
Photo by Joe Allawos

The Chime

Richard DeLuca

I was waiting in the shoe department in McAlpin's, one of Cincinnati's oldest department stores. From where I sat, I could comfortably observe shoppers coming from both directions toward the intersection of the two main aisles.

A chime sounded. Someone was signaling a sales associate or a manager.

I looked down at the cup of soup the waitress placed in front of me, then turned toward my mother who sat facing her younger cousin across the table. Their profiles were not at all similar, though their mothers were sisters who came together from southern Poland. Cousin Esther's face was rounded and smooth, with a robustness that needed no makeup. Her dark hair was cut short. She smelled of starch and Spearmint gum. My mother's face was haggard; her eyes were red-rimmed and puffy. Her hair, a color between light brown and dark blonde, was lifeless. She smelled of coffee and exhaustion.

We were in the Walnut Room at Marshall Field's. It was October 1944; I was almost four years old. My father had died two months earlier, although my mother didn't know it until the middle of September.

Cousin Esther was home on leave from the WAVES. She had invited us to lunch before she headed for the Illinois Central Station and the train home to Hegewisch. It was the first time they had seen each other since my mother opened the yellow Western Union envelope on our front porch.

The mailman, Tom Dougherty, knew what it was. He had already

delivered hundreds of telegrams with two purple stars stamped at the top. As I watched through the screen door, Tom put his arm around my mother's shoulder to steady her as she read.

"The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you …," it began.

"Helga, I don't know what to say. When Ma wrote to tell me, I just couldn't believe it," Cousin Esther whispered. She began to sob. "He's gone. Johnny's gone."

I watched a tear run down my mother's cheek, making a tiny furrow in her makeup as it slowly moved toward her chin. Is that her last tear? I wondered. How could there be any left, after so many weeks of crying?

Then, at some invisible signal, my mother and her cousin pushed back their chairs, came around the table, and fell into each other's arms, sobbing.

"Oh, ooh Helen, Helen. *Jesus, Maria,* I'm so, so sorry."

My mother said nothing. She just stared across the Walnut Room as tears ran down her face and onto the shoulder of Cousin Esther's uniform jacket.

I tasted my soup. Cream or asparagus. I liked it.

The chime sounded again.

Joe Allawos

Sunrise in the window pane
Has woken me this day again.
Looking at the vast expanse
Of tempest flair in garnet hair.
The lightning flashed, the fire formed,
The rant to me I never scorned.
The day I saw you in my dream,
Serena Belva, little queen
Of mountains towering overhead,
Of every living thing alive.
Instead of God, yes, why not she?
As fair as any god could be.
Still fairer still, then God might wish,
And to this could pass for doubt,
Could pass for freedom calling out.
Those tender eyes I eulogize
With flowing thoughts and futile plots,
To coax her into games of lust,
I know that first to gain her trust.
A clever secret ever held,
Within my grasp this fiery rasp
That cuts through skin and flesh and bone
Right to her heartstrings, I expose
And plucked precisely and with care
The song I make floats in the air.
And she cannot resist its charm
The status of a neon spark
Has left my head to now embark
Upon some utter, languid game
What seems so different stays the same.

lips pressed in darkness

Joe Allawos

A perfect fit, lips pressed in the darkness,
No addled confusion here,
Just warmth, embraced, wrapped, joined in
The most sensual fix.
Where spirit, mind, body, heart and soul mix.
Like spun strands threaded through the loom,
Dyed different colors, put together by the woven hand.
By my threaded colors, feed my loom.
Tranquil, peaceful, strong; forever turning, spinning, wearing.
With what grand precision we embraced.
You heated my emotions to a million degrees
Yet even still I tried to deny the longing heart.
I tried to deny my longing heart;
Tried to extinguish the fertile heart;
But you dragged it right out of me;
Like I was some poor, sick leper
Hailed as if by magic power
And the excitement in your bright, elusive eyes.

The Waiting

Ron Layne

Light folds about the Standard to caress

The outline of those strained features that show

No remorse nor hope while white few address

Legions so enraptured they scarcely know

She stands outside their grand councils until

The solitary figure beckons her

And she takes graceful steps against her will

Toward the passing she may yet alter.

The weary legions stir petals as she,

Along with her companion, watches as they

Drift through outstretched hands in carefully

Measured cadence knowing they dare not stay.

She walks with Ophelia, their hands entwine,

While drawing toward their ebony shrine.

Untitled

(Dedicated to Mabel Lowman, my first teaching partner who died in 2004)

Chris Tibbetts

I am drawn to
women of a certain generation.
my mother's generation
yet not my mother.
women who have lived their
lives
fully
with love for themselves
and for others
giving
of their talent
        experience
                wisdom
                        humor
without giving up all
of themselves.
my mother's generation,
yet not my mother.
I needed you
to become one of you.
Thank you.

Portland Head Light, Port Elizabeth, Maine
Photo by Lee Schleining

To the Baby-Faced Smoker Standing Outside of Laurel on a February Morning

Randee Goodstadt

The Art of Happiness and a cigarette
Just means you're probably not there yet.

I see your baby face so smooth
I see your adolescent eyes
I see your Goodwill army coat
I hear your disappointed sighs.

So try what all the wise ones say
Try Buddha and the healing arts
Try everything your parents hate
Try to create a brand new start.

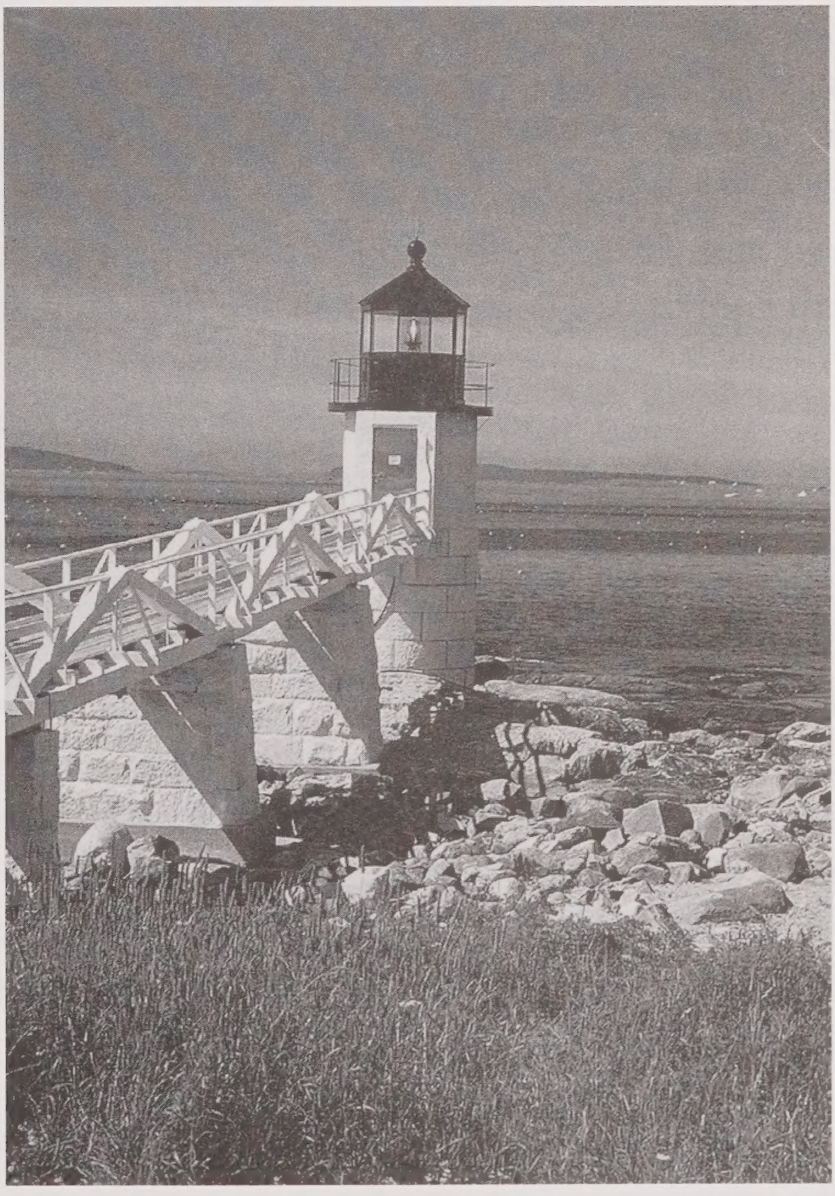
And stand outside the Laurel halls
Stand out in the freezing air
Stand outside the Western World
Let the wind blow through your hair.

And older observers such as I
So well taught by decades past
That harsh taskmaster of our lives
And now our time goes by so fast.

We watch you suffer, watch you try
Watch your mind and body grow
Know the chance that is your youth
Know that years will ebb and flow.

And after all is said and done
What more than this to say to you?
Youth is wasted on the young
And wisdom on the chosen few.

This too shall pass
This too shall pass
This too shall pass
This too shall pass.



Pemaquid Point Lighthouse, Maine
Photo by Lee Schleining

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Nancy Dillingham is the author of three books of short stories and poems—*New Ground (1998)*, *The Ambiguity of Morning* (2001), and *First Light* (2003). Her forthcoming book is entitled *Thanks for the Dark but That's Not Home: Poems and Stories*. Her work currently appears in the *Asheville Poetry Review's* tenth anniversary issue. She is an instructor in Adult Basic Skills.

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Ron Rash's family has lived in the southern Appalachian mountains since the mid-1770's, and it is this region that is the primary focus of his writing. Rash grew up in Boiling Springs, NC, and graduated from Gardner-Webb and Clemson University. He holds the John Parris Chair in Appalachian Studies at WCU. In 1994 he was awarded an NEA Poetry Fellowship and won the Sherwood Anderson Prize in 1996. In 2001 he won the Novello Festival Award and in 2002 was awarded Foreword Magazine's Gold Medal in Literary Fiction for his novel *One Foot in Eden*. The novel was also named Appalachian Book of the Year. In 2005 he won an O. Henry award for his

story "Speckled Trout." His poetry and fiction have appeared in over eighty journals and magazines, including *Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *Poetry*. He is the author of seven books: *The Night the New Jesus Fell to Earth* (short stories), *Casualties* (short stories), *Eureka Mill* (poetry), *Among the Believers* (poetry), *Raising the Dead* (poetry), and *One Foot in Eden* (novel). His second novel, *Saints at the River,* was published by Henry Holt in 2004. In March of 2005 he was awarded the James Still Award by the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

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***Victoria Press* continues to include contributions from neighboring community colleges. We thank each contributor, especially Fred Chappell and Ron Rash.**

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501 B8 P3622
06/07/05 30395 SELB